

Encyclopedia of Circumcision in Islam and Modern Science

Introduction:

Circumcision, known as 'Khitan' in Arabic, is an important practice in Islam and is considered an act of purity and obedience to Allah. It involves the removal of the foreskin from the male organ and is performed as a religious, hygienic, and health-related act. Islam regards circumcision as part of the 'fitrah' — the natural way created by Allah for humans. Modern science also supports circumcision for its numerous health and hygiene benefits.

Circumcision in Islamic Teachings:

In Islam, circumcision is a Sunnah of Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) عليه السلام and was continued by Prophet Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم. It symbolizes cleanliness, purity, and submission to Allah's commands. The Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: 'Five things are part of fitrah: circumcision, shaving the pubic hair, trimming the mustache, clipping the nails, and removing the hair from under the arms.' (Bukhari 5891, Muslim 257). This shows that Islam links circumcision directly with personal hygiene and natural human health.

Circumcision and Prophet Ibrahim (A.S.):

Prophet Ibrahim عليه السلام was the first to perform circumcision as an act of obedience to Allah. He did so at an old age of 80 years, according to authentic Hadith. The Prophet Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم said: 'Ibrahim circumcised himself when he was eighty years old.' (Bukhari 3356, Muslim 2370). This practice was then passed down through generations and made part of Islamic tradition.

Religious Importance in Islam:

Circumcision is considered a Sunnah Mu'akkadah (highly recommended act) in Islam and is obligatory according to many scholars. It is an essential part of purification and is required before offering prayer or performing Hajj. It is usually performed in childhood, symbolizing the child's inclusion in the Muslim community and the continuation of prophetic practice.

Timing of Circumcision:

There is no fixed age for circumcision in Islam, but it is generally recommended to perform it in early childhood. Some scholars suggest the seventh day after birth, following the tradition of the Prophet Ibrahim عليه السلام. Performing circumcision early ensures quick healing and less discomfort. It is also performed as part of the Aqiqah (newborn celebration) in many Muslim cultures.

Health and Hygiene Benefits:

Modern medical research confirms that circumcision offers several health benefits: 1. Prevention of infections: It reduces the risk of urinary tract infections (UTIs) and other bacterial diseases. 2. Reduced risk of HIV and STDs: Studies show circumcised men have a lower risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases. 3. Improved hygiene: It prevents the buildup of harmful bacteria under the foreskin. 4. Lower risk of penile

cancer: Circumcision reduces inflammation and infections that can lead to serious diseases. 5. Better protection for partners: It reduces transmission of HPV (Human Papilloma Virus) to women, lowering cervical cancer risk.

Scientific Research on Circumcision:

Modern studies by the World Health Organization (WHO) and medical associations confirm that circumcision has significant health advantages. It is widely practiced in Muslim, Jewish, and even non-religious communities for medical reasons. Research shows that circumcision lowers infection rates and promotes better genital hygiene in men of all ages.

Circumcision and Personal Hygiene:

Islam emphasizes cleanliness in every aspect of life. Circumcision makes it easier to maintain cleanliness, especially during ablution (Wudu) before prayers. It helps avoid the accumulation of impurities that could prevent valid prayer. This aligns perfectly with Islam's broader principle of purity and hygiene.

Circumcision and Psychological Well-being:

Medical professionals agree that circumcision performed in infancy has minimal psychological impact. When done with care and under safe medical conditions, it promotes confidence and reduces the risk of infections and anxiety related to hygiene. It also contributes to a sense of belonging within the Muslim community.

Circumcision for Females (Clarification):

Islam does not command circumcision for females as it does for males. Any harmful form of female genital mutilation is forbidden in Islam. The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said: 'Do not destroy; it is better for the woman and more desirable for the husband.' (Abu Dawood 5271 – weak narration). Islam strictly prohibits any practice that causes harm or violates human dignity.

Spiritual Benefits of Circumcision:

Circumcision is not only a physical purification but also a spiritual act. It represents a Muslim's obedience to Allah and connection to the covenant made by Prophet Ibrahim عليه السلام. It completes the fitrah (natural disposition) of a believer, aligning the physical body with spiritual purity. The Prophet ﷺ said: 'Purity is half of faith.' (Muslim 223).

Scientific and Religious Harmony:

The harmony between Islam and modern science is clearly seen in the practice of circumcision. What Islam prescribed 1,400 years ago for purity and health is now scientifically proven to reduce disease and promote well-being. This confirms that the teachings of Islam are not only spiritual but also practical for human health and hygiene.

Circumcision and Public Health:

Medical experts recommend circumcision as a public health measure, especially in areas with high rates of infections. It has been found to reduce the spread of HIV by up

to 60% according to WHO studies. This aligns with Islam's teaching of prevention and cleanliness, which are essential for community health.

Summary:

Circumcision (Khitan) is a practice deeply rooted in Islamic tradition and confirmed by modern medical science. It is an act of obedience, purity, and health preservation. Islam introduced it as part of the natural human fitrah, promoting both physical cleanliness and spiritual purity. Scientific studies today confirm its role in preventing infections, promoting hygiene, and protecting public health. Thus, circumcision is a perfect example of how Islamic teachings align with scientific truth for the benefit of humanity.